1: Holmberg--89 [3] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 751, 765, 778

"The skulls of the ancestors are preserved and carried around for a while as a protection from disease and death. They are also sometimes used in curing. No set rule determines whether a skull will be saved or thrown away. There is, however, a tendency to throw away old skulls as new deaths (and consequently new skulls) appear in the family, and there is also a proneness to save only the skulls of people greatly loved, such as young children, or of important personages in the family, such as great hunters or chiefs. Many mothers whom I knew in Tibaera were carrying around the skulls of infants who had died not long before. They all told me that they were apt to be sick if they did not follow this custom. In one family which I knew, the skull of a chief called Embutándu (Father-of-Bearded-one), had been carried around by one of his daughters for many years. Whenever any member of her family was ill, this skull was employed to effect a cure. On one occasion I walked into the house and found Nyéka, a son-in-law of the deceased Embutándu, 'sick in the chest.' He told me that he had an abačikwaiá (evil spirit) in his chest which was causing him great pain. I asked him how he was going to cure his ailment. He picked up the skull of Embutándu, rubbed it across his chest for a few minutes, and then replied, 'Tomorrow, I will not be sick.' "

"In the rainy season there is never any lack of water in this part of Bolivia, but in the dry season it may happen that even in the forest one finds difficulty in obtaining water. Near Casarabe there is a pool of water of which the Indians said it was the last to dry up. Once I went to look at it. It was situated in the midst of the forest. On the edge of the pool stood a branch (fig. 14) [MPK: not reproduced for this file.] on which were threaded the skulls of three monkeys and two coati (Nasua). At its foot lay a greatly decayed alligator skull, and in the fork of a neighbouring tree lay another monkey cranium. The branch [45] carrying the five skulls was of a shrub of which the Indian name is kodai. All other branches of the shrub had been cut down next to the ground, leaving only the one with the skulls after it had been trimmed of its twigs. This arrangement is called by the Siriono Indians ama rosakwari, meaning "water", or "flood-stick", and the only explanation I could obtain about it from them was that "it stopped the pool from drying up." It must be pointed out that the name rosakwari also is given to the Siriono calabashes for storing water. A similar arrangement is mentioned by WEGNER (1931, p. 61). On his way to the Siriono Indians of the Rio Grande district he passed a water-pool. Alongside of it there was a branch on which a number of monkey skulls had been threaded, and to an adjacent tree had been tied some motum feathers and a couple of partlyworked mussel shells, a find which WEGNER (1932, p. 337; 1934 c, p. 816) considers mainly connected with hunting magic. Regarding the presence of the alligator skull, attention may again be drawn to the episode related by NORDENSKIÖLD (1922, p. 122), when one

of his helpers in the presence of a Siriono Indian shot an alligator and by doing so destroyed the friendly relations between the Siriono Indian and Norderskiöld. Hence it would seem as if the alligator possessed some magical significance for the Sirionos."